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Sunset Piracy: The Ends of Atlantic Piratical Careers in the Age of Sail

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By

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Abstract

This thesis concerns the careers of pirates in the latest stage of that career, as pirates prepared to end their roving of the seas in order to "settle down." Though pirates are idolized in modern fiction, their ends are often overshadowed by the highlights of their careers. Here, the goal is to find what motivated pirates to engage in a life as outlaws and then at some point choose to cast that life aside. Conclusions on this are drawn from both primary and secondary sources where pirates gave information pertaining to their view of the world and retirement in it, often without realizing it. The thesis explores the interactions pirates had with the governments acting within the Atlantic world and the natives who inhabited it. Lastly, the thesis concludes that sea rovers gained a great deal through piracy, yet to retire they surrendered at least some of what they gained. Of interest, then, is what was lost through what methods of retirement, and what was retained through others.

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Introduction

When one hears the word "pirate" they could think of any number of things. A bloody cutlass, a fleet of ships with that iconic skull and crossbones fluttering on a flag above them, or (as has become more popular in the last two decades) the galleries of colorful pirates in animated works.[1] Additionally, there is no shortage of scholarly works on piracy, one can easily enter into most libraries and find at least a small number of books that detail the adventures of real sea rovers swashbuckling across the seas. Yet, all of these works focus on pirates during the zenith of their activities, normally with a short description of their lives before becoming an enemy in the eyes of all nations or *hostes humani generis*.[2] Thus, we are only getting a sliver of the first act, the middle in its entirety, and a missing ending. More often than not, scholarship has been content with a historical narrative filled with blanks. So, in this work, one goal is to obtain the missing pieces and demystify the pirates from their super-hero like status to people doing a job, albeit an illegal one.

The truth of the matter is that these blanks exist for a combination of many practical reasons. Pirates being criminals were rarely keen to have their activities extensively detailed in ways that could prove counterproductive to their aims in a court of law. Additionally, it seems time has not been kind in its preservation of what journals did

[1] The popularity of animated pirate series such as One Piece is difficult to overstate, having begun airing in 1999 with new episodes still being released since. As of March 11, 2020 there are 923 unique episodes and several movies. "One Piece," *MyAnimeList*, accessed March 11, 2020, https://myanimelist.net/anime/21/One_Piece

[2] Latin term meaning "enemy of mankind," often used to describe pirates. It implied that all nations should act together against piracy as piracy did damage to them all as it damaged valuable trade.

exist. For example, Captain Charles Johnson's *General History of the Pyrats* includes an excerpt from Edward "Blackbeard" Teach's journal, yet no knowledge of its whereabouts exists today.[3] Cases of mistaken identity, such as Johnson's, have compounded the barriers to discovery of pirate lifecycles. It is possible that this was just the status quo in the early modern period. People were interested in the history of Greece and Rome, but criminals at sea seems a vastly different and perhaps strange thing to chronicle.

Although there is no method with which to find these texts that are lost or no longer exists, much can still be gleaned about pirates' fates after their marauding careers. There are many facets of pirates' lives that have been left largely unexplored that we can learn from. What do our records of pirates say about individuals who willingly removed themselves from their home nation to immediately become criminals in search of gold or freedom? What methods would individuals who have made their career from stealing and plundering use to stop, to return to their homes, or find new homes far away from where they originally left.

Modern cinema often portrays pirates as gold obsessed simpletons who took to the sea in order to steal gold and just about nothing else. Assuming that pirates are only engaging in illegal activities for profits, then there is an inherent issue in the operation of pirates. Most pirates were filled with glee to have their prey recognize them and surrender out of pure terror and others even carried their warrants around for bragging rights, but that only made it the more difficult for them to reach a place where their ill-

[3] Charles Johnson, *A General History of the Pirates* (Columbia: Gannet Games, 2018), 41.

gotten gains could be spent.[4] Then the question becomes this: What was the plan, methodology, or happenstance that allowed pirates to enjoy the fruits of their labor?

In the three chapters that follow, there is a common Catch-22 in the beginning and end of pirate careers. Pirates took to the sea for varied reasons, but one that commonly recurs was for independence and freedom. While they most certainly had autonomy while at sea, when time came for their ship to dock and for them change the course of their lives, pirates needed someone else to aid them. This aid could come from their home government, an enemy of that government, or natives of a foreign land. The question then is: how much freedom could they surrender without losing what they gained, and how much could they fight to maintain it without obliterating the peaceful retirement they sought.

Chapter one will follow pirates as they made the choice to take to the sea and examines why they made this decision to cut themselves from the cloth of society and join with rouges despised by the media of their day. This helps to disperse the mythology that surrounds these individuals and gives us a sense of their rational reasons for, more often than not, consciously choosing to become criminals. Understanding the trade off of freedom, status, and basic quality of life that these individuals sought, gained, and chose to lose is essential.

Chapter two follows pirates who tackled this freedom trade-off by returning home to the nations from which they had originated. It assesses the methodology, reasons, and process that pirates took, or attempted to take, in order to go home with their ill-gotten

[4] Pére Labat, *The Memoirs of Pére Labat, 1693-1705*, ed. By John Eaden (London: Frank Cass And Company, 1970), 153.

gains. In many cases these pirates were able to return with their treasures and thus maintain the riches they had acquired, but lost many of the freedoms they had become accustomed to by returning to the role of a normal, but newly wealthy, subject. In many ways, these individuals can be seen as people who desired to "get away with it" and were primarily seeking to increase their economic status.

The individuals in chapter three contrasted from those in chapter two with their attempts to get "off the grid" outside of the clutches of Old World governments. This group was far more ambitious than those who attempted to simply return home, with them often settling islands with little or no European presence and interacting with natives in order to create hybrid societies. There were distinct tradeoffs as (piratical) European society melded with the societies of natives to maintain their individual independence. These relationships formed out of inevitable interaction and the necessities of defense. How the pirates engaged these groups and proceeded in their fringe colonies, more detached than ever from their original societies, determined their success in surviving on the fringes and retaining their autonomy perpetually.

For this work, sources of particular value are the first-hand travel accounts that were written by various adventurers during the age of sail. Due to the large number of pirates in the period, many individuals who sailed during this time would encounter pirates as a matter of course. These individuals, often without realizing it, gave the most detailed and insightful accounts of pirates and the manner in which they spoke, lived their lives, and practiced their customs. Although these works are often filled with "nautical jargon," as was pointed out by one contemporary satirist, they proved to be of immense

value.[5] Other works of value include the Calendar of State Papers, which concisely summarizes the communications between English government officials in the pre modern era, for primary sources on government actions. Additionally, published primary source readers concerning the Golden Age of Piracy aid in research on individual pirates and the events in specific locations in the Atlantic and occasionally the Indian Ocean. Numerous modern secondary source works give an understanding of the current views on pirates, such as Marcus Rediker's *Villains of All Nations* which argues that pirates are a worker revolt against the poor treatment of sailors during the Age of Sail and Peter T. Leeson's *The Invisible Hook* which sees pirates as entirely profit driven, floating companies. The most closely associated book to this thesis, in terms of subject matter, is Mark G. Hanna's *Pirate Nests and the Rise of the British Empire*. Though, as the second portion of the title suggests, Hanna's book is more interested in the relations of pirate nests to the growth of the British Empire, both economically and territorially.[6]

In terms of time period, the focus will be on what is commonly described as the "Golden Age of Piracy," which extended from the mid-sixteenth century to the early eighteenth century. Additionally, the Golden Age of Piracy occurred within the larger "Age of Sail," which took place from the beginning of the sixteenth century and ended with the nineteenth century. This period saw other nations besides the Spanish begin to take an interest in the New World, and was largely characterized by competition between

[5] Jonathan Swift, who wrote *Gulliver's Travels*, most famously satirized this jargon with "…but making foul weather, we looked the Guns were all fast and handed the missen. The ship lay very broad off, so we thought to better spooning before the Sea, than trying or hulling." Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*, in *The Essential Writings of Johnathan Swift*, ed. Claude Rawson and Ian Higgins (London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2010), 366-367.

[6] Marcus Rediker, *Villains of All Nations* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2004); Peter T. Leeson, *The Invisible Hook: The Hidden Economics of Piracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009); Mark G. Hanna, *Pirate Nests and the Rise of the British Empire* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015).

Spain, England, France, and the Netherlands. All of these countries produced large numbers of pirates throughout the era.

This thesis contends that retiring from piracy required submission of what was gained through that piracy and with that compromise. There was no way for pirates to stop and not lose something of theirs, and in many ways this portion is obvious. Yet, what this thesis finds is that the ways in which pirates approached retirement and then the specific ways they conduct themselves in the two broad categories of "returning home" and finding a "new home" are what truly matters. If a pirate was unwilling to submit themselves in some way, attempting to retain full autonomy, then they would suffer for it through death, indentured servitude, or the loss of the place they attempted their retirement. Through the research process it became clear that the nature of pirates does not allow them to live comfortably without significant change. Pirates were thieves, tools of war to the colonial system, and murderers. They were not able to remove their negative traits the day after they quit their long-time trade. Sea rovers were forced to pay some form of price in order to become "free" from the life they chose, whether the cost for that was freedoms themselves, money, or the culture they had formed at sea itself.

Before fully delving into how pirates returned to society (or what they did when they chose not to do so), it seems important to learn why they left in the first place in a constructive manner toward our central question. A career fraught with dangers varying from unpredictable hurricanes dashing your ship into a cliff to being caught, tried, and hanged does not sound tantalizing initially. So, what circumstances made the freedom that was afforded pirates worth this trying life, fraught with danger from not only imperial governments, but from the elements themselves.

Chapter 1: Why Pillage the Seas?

To better understand pirates' attempts to retire, we should understand why and how they came into the illegal business of piracy in the first place. The reasons someone begins doing something inherently affects when they stop that action and how they stop it. In storytelling, the device of "The Hero's Journey" is used to show the dramatic changes that occur to the "hero" of the tale from their humble beginnings to their return as a drastically different individual whose course through life has irreversibly been altered by their journey. What we gain from the beginning then is a sense of the people who began pirating and why, so that we can understand what these enigmatic people we call "pirates" want. If it is a free life from overbearing government: is that possible? Alternatively, do they only want to avoid a life of misery and poverty? That is our purpose here, identifying why these people wish to begin this strange life so far removed from what they were before and what kind of life that leads them to want when their time as pirates has ended. What we find was a group whose entire ideology was in contrast to the centralized power structures they had previously lived in, extending to both money and power.

For those who have not studied piracy extensively, it may come as a surprise that committing piracy did not necessarily make a person a criminal. The earliest pirates that fall within our purview are those collectively known as the Elizabethans and later the buccaneers, who entered into the world of "piracy" without the label of pirate attached to

them. These sea rovers were fighting more as mercenaries under a different title than roguish pirates marauding the seas. As the situation that surrounded them was so different from the pirates of the early eighteenth century, we should note the unique opportunities afforded them if they took to piracy. To the Elizabethans, and later the buccaneers, piracy was really only illegal in quotation marks. Europe existed in a state of constant political flux, and your home country's enemy was fair game, but whether or not they were still your country's enemy when you returned was often up in the air. The most famous of the Elizabethan pirates, Sir Francis Drake, saw this first hand when he had returned to England after his first circumnavigation, with a ship filled with Spanish gold. A recent insurrection in Ireland was blamed on the Spanish and thus Queen Elizabeth felt no need to return the wealth Drake had gathered until the Spanish presence in Ireland could be explained. Even then, England at the time questioned if Drake had broken any laws, as no treaty between Spain and England forbade Englishmen sailing in the Pacific.[7]

This fluctuating state of European affairs would remain as a constant factor that pirates had to concern themselves with until the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century when mercantilism and stability became more profitable than the pirates governments had fostered up until this point. Due to this shared restriction of working within the grip of European powers, the Elizabethans and Buccaneers shared more than their later ilk. While it would be incredibly strange to see an Elizabethan go so far, it was entirely common for a buccaneer, the successors to the Elizabethans based in New World

[7] John Sugden, *Sir Francis Drake* (New York: Touchstone, 1992), 147-148.

colonies, to court colonial governors even if they were of another nation![8] It is apparent that these swashbucklers were more than just pirates, but were also playing a game of politics. This was not something exclusive to the Elizabethans, but much different to them specifically in terms of the court in which they played. The politics played by the Elizabethans was that of kings and aristocrats, more than different than those thrusted upon later buccaneers who consorted with colonial governors.

The majority of pirates came from the peasant class, and as such these political affairs were generally outside of their standard wheelhouse, but the ability to work within that other world of politics was impressive in and of itself. During the early years of the Golden Age, piracy provided a method of social mobility like none other. Moving up in the England of the 1500s was not an easy task; piracy represented a means to upward mobility in an age that saw it as an alternative method of war rather than an illegal act. In many ways this played into the popularity of Sir Francis Drake. Drake was famed not only for his circumnavigation, but for naval victories over English enemies. Modern English culture still uses him as a symbol of unity and English fighting spirit today.[9] Drake's parents were yeoman farmers who leased their land. While in many ways they were successful and had more success than most who attempted the profession, they were still of a lower class.[10] Upon his death, Drake had done many things that seemed worlds away from the reach of the son of a yeoman farmer. He had circumnavigated the globe, become wealthy by plundering Spanish treasure, met personally with the queen of

[8] The National Archives, Colonial Office 1/52, fol. 215. Trans. by Arne Bialuschewski in *Piracy in the Early Modern Era: An Anthology Series,* ed. and trans. By Kris Lane and Arne Bialuschewski (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2019), 103.
[9] Sugden, *Sir Francis Drake*, 317-324.
[10] Sugden*, Sir Francis Drake,* 2.

England, was knighted, and even married an incredibly wealthy heiress.[11] The deeds of Francis Drake were not only abnormal for someone of a lower class in his era, they were nigh impossible, yet piracy allowed him the opportunity to do those things.

Upward mobility in this era also affected enslaved Africans in the West Indies. To them, piracy represented advantages similar to what the Elizabethans and Buccaneers had, except on an even greater scale. Piracy could allow one to be a slave one day and then an equal partner of a crew the next.[12] While to a lesser degree, Native Americans were also able to use piracy as a method of obtaining greater status, as it is suggested that Samuel Bellamy's crew had at least one Native American officer.[13] Bellamy was famous during the tail end of piracy's Golden Age as he had captured a "ship of force" called the *Whydah* that lead his small armada of almost two-hundred men. Unfortunately, the pirate and almost one-hundred-sixty of his men were killed in a hurricane not long after acquiring the *Whydah*.[14] More specifically, Diego el Mulatto's station in life was elevated by piracy through working with an enemy of his "home" nation. Diego's early life saw him mistreated and whipped in Havana, and in response, Diego joined a Dutch privateer sometime before 1637 and spent at least a portion of his life aiding them against Spain. Diego was so successful in his service to the Dutch, that they made him captain of a

[11] Sugden, *Sir Francis Drake,* 147-148, 151, 173-174.
[12] Marcus Rediker, *Villains of All Nations* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2004), 46, 55.
[13] Though Bellamy went by "Black Sam Bellamy," it is something of a misnomer as "Black" in this era did not necessarily mean someone was a person of color, but could simply possess a darker complexion than most white English. "The Substance of the Examinations of John Brown &c., 6 May, 1717." in *Pirates in Their Own Words,* ed. by E.T. Fox (Raleigh: Lulu Press, 2014), 83-92.
[14] Colin Woodard, *The Republic of Pirates: Being the True and Surprising Story of the Caribbean Pirates and the Man Who Brought Them Down* (Boston: Mariner Books, 2007), 169-185

ship.[15] So, while turning outlaw had most certainly alienated white pirates from European society as a whole, it gave minority groups a new seat at the piratical table.

Even for the white pirates, life outside piracy was not particularly easy. With some exception, such as the wealthy Stede Bonnet, most pirates came from the lower class in England. During this time about half of England was at or below the level of subsistence resulting in malnutrition, further resulting in them being an average of six inches shorter and living half as long as those wealthier than them. In addition, the city of London itself was destitute in numerous districts and filled with disease.[16] In other words, piracy may have been dangerous, but the quality of life exceeded that of an average Englishman on land.

Similarly, Henry Morgan came from obscurity to become the most famous buccaneer of his time. Morgan became so famous due to his buccaneering exploits, he was able to gather a fleet powerful enough to take the Spanish strong hold of Panama.[17] Unlike Drake, Morgan's origins are largely left to conjecture, but that even furthers the point of his upward social movement. Morgan was so unimportant before his pirate career that his arrival in the Caribbean was seen as an unimportant event that is largely lost to history, and the only record of him before that career is a portrait made when he

[15] Thomas Gage, *The English-American, His Travail by Sea and Land: or, A New Survey of the West-Indias,* in *Piracy in the Early Modern Era: An Anthology Series,* ed. and trans. By Kris Lane and Arne Bialuschewski (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2019), 62-66.
[16] Woodard, *The Republic of Pirates*, 30-35.
[17] Alexander O. Exquemelin, *The Buccaneers of America,* Trans. Alexis Brown (Mineola: Dover Publications, 1969), 195-197; "Venice: June 1671, 11-20," in Calendar of State Papers Relating To English Affairs in the Archives of Venice, Volume 37, 1671-1672, ed. Allen B Hinds (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1939), 73-79. *British History Online*, accessed February 4, 2020, http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/venice/vol37/pp73-79.

was a child.[18] Most likely he arrived as a lowly soldier for England's invasion of Spain's Caribbean holdings. Afterward, Morgan lived his life in Jamaica like a noble, fighting petty fights with other local leaders and drinking to excess.[19] His life after piracy was such a far cry from his early life that it did not even merit recording.

Alexander O. Exquemelin's increase in status is also notable. Exquemelin would go on to accompany Morgan on his most famous raids and chronicle his, and other buccaneers, exploits in what would become one of the most prized primary sources on buccaneering. When he first arrived in the Caribbean, he was an indentured servant of the French West India Company on the island of Tortuga. As the enterprise on Tortuga began to prove unprofitable, the company decided to cut its losses and sell everything of value at its disposal, Exquemelin included. After being sold to a man with little regard for Exquemelin's life, Exquemelin deteriorated to the point of being close to death. As a result, he was sold again, this time to a surgeon. Thankfully this new master seems to have cared a great deal more for Exquemelin and offered him his freedom for "150 pieces of eight, agreeing to wait for payment until [he] had earned the money."[20] Following this, Exquemelin joined the buccaneers without delay. The fact that Exquemelin made no mention of other opportunities to pay for his freedom exemplified the profitability piracy could entail.

Before Exquemelin could rove the seas, first came the articles of agreement, which were another incentive to pillage the seas. In many ways these articles, present on

[18] Stephan Talty, *Empire of Blue Water: Captain Morgan's Great Pirate Army, the Epic Battle for the Americas, and the Catastrophe That Ended the Outlaw's Bloody Reign* (New York: Broadway Paperbacks, 2008), 9-10.
[19] Talty, *Empire of Blue Water*, 279-282.
[20] Exquemelin, *The Buccaneers of America*, 34.

virtually all pirates ships, were the freedom many pirates pursued. They governed everything the pirates would do from shares of the plunder to reimbursement of destroyed ships. Unlike in the service of the navy or merchant ships, piracy resulted in a relatively egalitarian payout.[21] While it would change with time, in the buccaneering era (The early and mid-seventeenth century) the only men to make more were the admiral(s), the investors who owned the ship, and the country authorizing the raid, who would take a portion for their sovereign. The only catch was that this system resulted in a no-prey-no-pay situation. This only further enticed pirates to put in their best efforts towards the success of the raid. If one were to get injured in the endeavor, the articles even address worker's compensation. For the low price of a limb, the articles promised 120 pounds. By these terms, Exquemelin would already be most of the way to paying for his freedom.[22] With formal documents such as the articles protecting pirates, piracy must have seemed a lucrative option. That said, Exquemelin was not the only one reliant on the buccaneers for generating wealth.

Pirates enjoyed a certain amount of fame as numerous islands and settlements in both the Caribbean and colonial America profited from and encouraged the existence of pirates. This pro-pirate impression throughout the colonies resulted in pirates being more idolized than vilified. The island of Jamaica ran off piracy like a car does gasoline. Every arrival by the buccaneers after a raid was met with cheers as the city prepared to serve its

[21] "Henry Morgan's Articles of Agreement," in *Piracy in the Early Modern Era: An Anthology Series*, ed. and trans. By Kris Lane and Arne Bialuschewski (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2019), 81-86.
[22] It is also likely that Exquemelin obtained his surgical skills under his second "owner" and thus was something of a hot commodity amongst the buccaneers who valued both carpenters and surgeons above all others. "Henry Morgan's Articles of Agreement," in *Piracy in the Early Modern Era: An Anthology Series*, ed. and trans. By Kris Lane and Arne Bialuschewski, 81-86.

newly enriched sea rovers with liquor and prostitutes.[23] Buccaneers arriving after a raid seemed to spend their money with no regard for their financial longevity, much to the joy of local tavern owners. Indeed between 1665 and 1685, at least 19 bars were registered in the small port city with a population of only 4,500 free residents in 1658.[24] For a lower class citizen to witness the buccaneers return to port, sending the whole city into a state of celebration, and living like kings must have spurred them towards the profession.

Despite being the greatest example, colonial reliance on piracy was not isolated to Jamaica. The colonies of North America used piracy in order to inhibit supply shocks into their fledgling economies, seeing it as a better alternative than the long-term gains of agricultural development.[25] In conjuncture with being another location for pirates to dock, these nests also existed as places of origin for more pirates to take to the trade as they witnessed other members of their local communities doing so, with little legal punishment. As more fledgling colonies cropped up across the North American coast, it seemed pirate haunts were in endless supply, though as these colonies developed the supply began to run dry.

Unbeknownst to many of the pirates, these ports did take advantage of the buccaneer's loose grasp of their funds, making it more difficult for pirates to stop once they began. Merchants were known to illegally weigh their scales in their favor prior to the return of a buccaneering raid.[26] Doing this, the merchants were not only making a

[23] Talty, *Empire of Blue Water*, 132-140; Exquemelin, *Buccaneers of America*, 140.
[24] Kris E. Lane, *Pillaging The Empire: Piracy in the Americas 1500-1750* (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1998), 105-106.
[25] Mark G. Hanna, *Pirate Nests and the Rise of the British Empire* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 14.
[26] Talty, *Empire of Blue Water*, 130.

quick extra profit, they were also hastening the impoverishment of their pirate clients. With empty pockets the pirates returned to pirating, much to the joy of the Jamaican business owners who eagerly awaited their return. Exquemelin even notes: "When Morgan saw that his men had squandered the Maracaibo booty and were just as badly off as before, he thought of a new enterprise, knowing he would have little trouble persuading them to a fresh attack on the Spanish coast."[27] Thus, it is apparent that wealth drove pirates to pirate and second parties profited from piracy were incentivized to perpetuate it.

One incentive to pirate that was shared, no matter the era, was the desire for revenge. As previously stated, Diego el Mulatto began pirating after suffering mistreatment in Havana, then a Spanish colony. It can be assumed that Holland's then hostile relationship with Spain was, if not a deciding factor, one of glee for Diego.[28] Drake had a similar hate for the Spanish due to a perceived slight during one of his early voyages, in addition to religious differences. Drake at times even proclaimed a desire to "[singe] the King of Spain's beard" and later that he had, after a military engagement at the Bay of Cadiz in 1587.[29] The later pirates also seem to have been motivated by revenge; in their case it was often against officers on merchant and navy vessels who "cruelly beat and [abused]" them.[30] Though not a reason for originally becoming a pirate, Bartholomew Roberts exemplifies their vengeful nature with the Jolly Roger he adopted

[27] Exquemelin, *The Buccaneers of America*, 167.
[28] Thomas Gage, *The English-American, His Travail by Sea and Land: or, A New Survey of the West-Indias,* in *Piracy in the Early Modern Era: An Anthology Series*, ed. and trans. By Kris Lane and Arne Bialuschewski, 62-66.
[29] Sugden, *Sir Francis Drake*, 33-38, 210.
[30] "Piracy destroy'd: Or, A short discourse shewing The Rise, Growth and Causes of Piracy of late… In a Letter from an Officer of an East-India Ship Lately arriv'd in the River, to the Deputy Governour of the East-India-Company, London" (London: 1701), 3.

midway through his career.[31] After the governors of Barbados and Martinico attempted to capture his crew, Roberts had a Jolly Roger made "with his own figure portrayed, standing upon two skulls, and under them the letters A B H and A M H, signifying a Barbadian's and a Martinican's Head."[32]

Somewhat expectantly, greed was perhaps one of the greatest motivations for all pirates to rove the seas. The economic historian Peter T. Leeson has argued that almost every aspect of piracy is the result of logical problem solving for maximum profit.[33] Whereas others might see piratical articles and explain how each is a reflection of pirate's past interaction with poorly (or unfairly) organized ships, Leeson simply sees what is a superior structure for further financial gain in the pirate's situation as enemies of mankind.[34] Under this lens the 11.5-15 pounds a year that was given to the average sailor is all the explanation you need for piracy's pinnacle in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[35] Leeson's points are strong, but he sees greed as a "cure-all" to explain piracy, when it was a combination of numerous factors that culminated to allow the Golden Age to occur.

All of these incentives to pirate are freedoms in one way or another. They are not all attempting to explain the outbreak of piracy we call the Golden Age alone, but are acting together in order to do so. Historians such as Marcus Rediker have suggested that

[31] Jolly Roger: A pirate flag, often displaying a skull and crossbones or other imagery invoking thoughts of death.
[32] Johnson, *A General History of the Pirates*, 127.
[33] The title of Leeson's book itself is an illusion to this: *The Invisible Hook* being a direct reference to Adam Smith's economic concept of the invisible hand.
[34] Peter T. Leeson, *The Invisible Hook: The Hidden Economics of Piracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 58-63; Rediker, *Villains of All Nations*, 60-82.
[35] Woodard, *The Republic of Pirates,* 35.

piracy became a method of class rebellion against the treatment pirates suffered under the thumb of "ministers, royal officials, wealthy men; in short, rulers."[36] From this perspective, pirates practiced their trade as an expression of their desire for freedom and the "perpetuation of a life of liberty."[37] As stated, much of this liberty emerged from the articles of agreement, which governed the lives of all pirates with individual articles on each ship. The previously listed incentives to become a pirate all roll into this in a way. In an era when wealth is such a rarity, it in itself represented a sort of freedom. Money was a power that could allow more flexibility in a person's way of life, just as it does today. While revenge may seem an odd kind of freedom, when you live in a position without any form of recourse, such as Diego did, it most certainly is a freedom.

In addition to all these reasons to become a pirate, there are many outliers. Much like asking a group of carpenters why they build things, asking a group of pirates why they plunder would yield a bevy of varying responses. Simon Jones, for instance, left his captured captain to join the pirates, because in his words, "his circumstances were bad at home: Moreover, he had a wife whom he could not love; and for these reasons he had entered with the pirates and signed their Articles."[38] Though escaping from one's homelife hardly seems worthy of its own check-box on the "why pirate" questionnaire.

Some pirates had grandiose dreams of holding political power that they believed could be achieved through piracy. Walter Kennedy stated he went into piracy because he wished to join the pirates who gained control of several entire islands in the Caribbean

[36] Rediker, *Villains of All Nations*, 5.
[37] Rediker, *Villains of All Nations*, 36-37.
[38] William Snelgrave, *A new account of some parts of Guinea, and the slave-trade... A relation of the author's being taken by pirates, and the many Dangers he underwent* (London: 1734), 219-220.

and he wished to become "one of those petty princes," illustrating his desire for a separation from European society if not power as well.[39] Kennedy had been misinformed, New Providence did exist as a pirate haven, fully under pirate control, but it had no petty kings. In a twist of irony, Kennedy had actually sailed on Woodes Rogers' ship, the *Buck*, in order to get to the West Indies. Woodes Rogers had driven the pirates off New Providence in the Bahamas.[40] If Kennedy had gone to Madagascar he would have actually found a pirate kingdom led by numerous pirate kings, though they squabbled and warred constantly. The Pirate Kingdom of Madagascar was almost certainly far from the utopia that Kennedy would have hoped to find.[41]

Then perhaps some pirates pirated out of delusion or issues of mental health. The pirate Stede Bonnet's mental health was certainly within question, with the contemporary pirate historian Charles Johnson stating he suffered from a "disorder in his mind." Prior to becoming a pirate, Bonnet was a wealthy land owner on Barbados with a wife and daughter, who he never made an attempt to see again after "going on the account." Then there were individuals like Paulsgrave Williams, whose reason for pirating may have changed over time. Williams, like Bonnet, lived a relatively luxurious life before becoming a pirate. Yet, Williams' childhood was altered by his step-father who was involved in more than a small amount of illicit business and possessed a great hate for the English due to the conquest of Scotland.[42] Two years after the height of his career as

[39] "Walter Kennedy's views on the pirate life," in *Pirates in Their Own Words,* ed. by E.T. Fox, 113-117.
[40] Woodard, *The Republic of Pirates*, 262-281.
[41] Clement Downing, *A compendious history of the Indian Wars… By Clement Downing, Midshipman on board the Salisbury; afterwards Lieutenant of the Victory Frigate, Fame Gally, and Revenge Grab, part of the Squndron employ'd by the East-India Company to attack Angria; and sometime Engineer in the Service of the Great Mogul* (London: 1737), 122-123.
[42] Woodard, *The Republic of Pirates*, 95-97.

quarter master on another ship, Williams was met by Captain William Snelgrave, who had been a prisoner of the pirates for months. In transit to the ship Williams was on, another captain advised Snelgrave to refer to Williams as captain, which he did. Upon doing so, Williams only lightly slapped Snelgrave on the shoulder with the flat of his cutlass, saying: "he had not the heart to hurt me (Snelgrave)." Snelgrave then states that Williams gave him a keg of wine and "was my friend ever after."[43] Snelgrave was under the impression that at some point, Williams had been a captain and now hated that his position was quarter master.[44] Perhaps Williams was delusional and only sought after his former glory, especially as the last stage of piracy's Golden Age was slowly grinding to a halt. In truth, there is an argument that Stede Bonnet and Paulsgrave Williams were not actually outliers and that mental health played a significant role in the decision of numerous people to turn pirate, but as psychology was largely lost on the people of piracy's Golden Age, it seems a question impossible to answer.

Upon entering the eighteenth century and even a half-decade before, piracy was beginning to be seen in an entirely different light; it seemed as though the world that had tried so hard to foster and court the pirates was now doing everything in its power to destroy them and thus more reasons to not become a pirate emerged. The powers of Europe and their merchants began to favor the more predictable profits of peaceful trade over the often messy, if large, profits of pirate raids. In the opinion of the historian Robert C. Ritchie, this is epitomized with Captain Kidd who was caught, tried, and executed for

[43] Snelgrave, *A new account of some parts of Guinea, and the slave-trade... A relation of the author's being taken by pirates, and the many Dangers he underwent,* 258-259.

[44] This is odd for a number of reasons, technically on a pirate ship, the quartermaster actually has more power than the captain as the quartermaster represents the crew and their welfare as a whole and the captain only has command during military engagement. While there is a prestige to being called "Captain Williams", it seems hardly worth such a reaction.

actions that would have been of little legal consequence only a few decades earlier.[45] With this, piracy changed in a number of ways, and there was no longer a need for the appearance of legitimacy nor selective targeting of nationalities.[46] Ironically, international attempts to reduce the prevalence of piracy had actually pushed pirates to be less selective of their targets and freely attack at their own discretion, throwing caution to the wind now that they were receiving no protection from their imperial masters.

Clearly there were many reasons to go on the account, but they often folded together under the umbrella of searching for freedoms they did not have in their previous lives, with the exception of when they showed less rational aspects of their character. Logically then, it must be asked how did retirement work for those who had gained this freedom, and if they wanted to retire, had to at least partially give it up. In the embrace of governments, they once again became subjects, but this time with the power afforded by wealth. How does a pirate cope with going home, if they can even get there?

[45] Robert C. Ritchie, *Captain Kidd and the War against the Pirates* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986), 233; Rediker, *Villains of All Nations*, 24.
[46] Leeson, *The Invisible Hook*, 183-184.

Chapter 2: Going Home.

The most logical way to end a career of piracy is by going back to where you originated and "starting over" in a new life, preferably with new wealth. When pirates left their old lives for their new ones on the sea, they transitioned from impoverished lower-class individuals to infamous sea rovers. When people of modern society think of retirement, they conjure images of sitting in a lawn chair on a sunny beach, with some form of alcohol in hand; in many cases pirates wanted something similar. Unfortunately for pirates, piracy had more hurdles to retirement than your average office job, especially as time moved forward and contemporary attitudes towards pirates changed. Despite this difficulty, a number of pirates still managed to rejoin society, sometimes with fame, but more often with the law on their heels.

How did these individuals return to a society that either saw them as protectors of the colonial order or, in the eithteenth century, as an enemy of all mankind? To answer this question, observation of their approach to returning to this society is necessary. These men had committed acts of war in quasi-legal circumstances and often had resorted to actual torture.[47] Firstly an exploration must be made of the initial challenges these Sea Rovers faced, then a look at the careers that pirates were in a favorable position to take up. Obviously, pirates had a rather unique background that afforded them new

[47] Benerson Little, *The Sea Rover's Practice: Pirate Tactics and Techniques, 1630-1730* (Lincoln: Potomac, 2007), 203-204.

opportunities on account of their knowledge of sea faring, warfare, and topography. Lastly, there will be an investigation of the methods pirates took in order to get back home without ending up hanging from the noose. No matter how much a pirate pleaded that they would change their ways, as they often did when at the gallows, governments were rarely forgiving after the pirate had been caught.

For pirates, timing was often everything in returning home, it would not look good to come home to England with arms full of Spanish treasure the day after the formation of a new alliance between the two countries. As previously stated, even the now famous Sir Francis Drake feared legal seizure upon returning to England in 1580, due to England's then improving relations with the Spanish from whom he had stolen, but thankfully for Drake the political climate had shifted in favor of actions against the Spanish almost immediately after he landed.[48] Still this shows the danger that even the most highly regarded of privateers ran by returning home. Drake had received a message upon first landing that showed a much more volatile atmosphere: Drake was in "Her Majesty's bad graces because she had already heard… of the robberies he had commited [sic]."[49] If Drake had arrived only a few days earlier, it is entirely possible that Queen Elizabeth would have turned him over to the Spanish rather than draw their ire. Despite these legal issues, these Elizabethan pirates were not viewed in the same lens as their later brethren, at times even having merchants mourn their deaths.[50] Thus, assuming they

[48] John Sugden, *Sir Francis Drake* (New York: Touchstone, 1992), 147-148.
[49] John Drake, "Second Narrative of The Voyage of Circumnavigation Given by John Drake: The Voyage of Captain Francis (1587)," *in New light on Drake; a collection of documents relating to his voyage of circumnavigation, 1577-1580*, ed. Zelia Nuttall (London: Hakluyt Society, 1914), 55.
[50] "America and West Indies: Addenda 1596," in *Calendar of State Papers Colonial, America and West Indies: Volume 9, 1675-1676* and *Addenda 1574-1674*, ed. W Noel Sainsbury (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1893), 30-31. *British History Online*, accessed November 15, 2019, http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/colonial/america-west-indies/vol9/pp30-31.

could navigate the initial political turmoil, their lives back on land could remain untarnished by their piratical profession.

While political issues could cause fallout upon one's return home, at times they were only for show, as a sort of political theater. Henry Morgan's successful raid on the city of Panama saw him taken prisoner to London to answer for his attack on the Spanish city, only to be rewarded for the act later.[51] Yet, Morgan had another, less bureaucratic issue, namely Alexander Exquemelin's book that described Morgan's raids in detail. It elaborated on the bloody business of Morgan's buccaneering, which utilized torture on civilians as a means of information extraction.[52] After the raid on Panama, Morgan's pirate career was largely over and he moved into politics, specifically in Jamaica. It is not difficult to imagine the scandal today, if a U.S. senator was found to have tortured civilians during a foreign war and the events were described in graphic detail in a bestselling book. In other words, Exquemelin, whose account virtually verified himself as an eye witness, proved to be an obstacle for Morgan's budding career in government and a possible threat to the social status he had gained through piracy.

In response, Morgan sued the English publisher of Exquemelin's book for libel, though it seems they settled out of court and at least one publisher was forced to apologize:

> The Cruelties and barbarous Usages of the Spaniards, when at his Mercy… were wholly an error in the Original Author of this History… the Cruelties there

[51] Stephan Talty, *Empire of Blue Water: Captain Morgan's Great Pirate Army, the Epic Battle for the Americas, and the Catastrophe That Ended the Outlaw's Bloody Reign* (New York: Broadway Paperbacks, 2008), 266-267.
[52] Little, *The Sea Rover's Practice*, 82.

> related, after taking of Puerto del Principe, and the blowing up the Castle at Puerto Velo, are not true… Sir Henry Morgan, having power, by his commission, both of Life and Limb, over all his fleet and Army, it is not credible that he would suffer either any such Cruelties of Debaucheries to be done.[53]

This excerpt gives a sense of Morgan's fears and the specific things he wished to have removed. Events in someone's time as a pirate could produce severe repercussions in any career they attempted in the future. In fact, even Exquemelin knew this. In his own book he constantly swaps his written perspective from first to third person in order to avoid having himself associated with the less savory parts of buccaneering.[54] Exquemelin's desire to avoid self-incrimination only extended to protecting himself. Ironically, Exquemelin's book seems to have done little damage to Morgan's political career which actually ended when he was overheard saying, "God damn the Assembly" in a drunken stupor.[55]

Despite the fears of either immediate seizure or publication of their actions as sea raiders, pirates seem to have had a reasonably large list of new career opportunities before them once their sea roving days had ended. Some pirates took their ill-gotten gains and immediately reinvested them and became merchant captains. This extended across the spectrum of pirates. This was the chosen career of Christopher Condent, one of the

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[53] William Crooke, "William Crooke's Apology", quoted in Francis Russel Hart, *Admirals of the Carribean* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1922), 97.
[54] Alexander O. Exquemelin, *The Buccaneers of America,* Trans. Alexis Brown (Mineola: Dover Publications, 1969), 97.
[55] "America and West Indies: October 1683, 1-15," in *Calendar of State Papers Colonial, America and West Indies: Volume 11, 1681-1685*, ed. J W Fortescue (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1898), 511-518. *British History Online*, accessed November 15, 2019, http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/colonial/america-west-indies/vol11/pp511-518.

more bloody pirates of the eighteenth century who had merchant captains he captured "whipped and pickled" if their crews complained about them.[56] Condent moved to France before beginning his merchant career, possibly in order to avoid his reputation in the English speaking world as it would seem uncomfortable to work with a merchant known to murder merchants. This would suggest the additional option for some pirates to place themselves somewhere they could be shrouded by the language barrier.

Another option was for pirates to recount their adventures in books. In addition to Exquemelin, other buccaneers also took this route. The buccaneer and logwood cutter William Dampier put his life to ink in two volumes, each having incredible popularity. Additionally, Dampier's work was sprinkled with his own naturalist observations during his travels, with examples such as, "the wild pine, viscum caryophylloides, is a plant so called, because it somewhat resembles the bush that bears the pine-apple."[57] This was also a feature of Exquemelin's work, although his is filled with many pirate folklore-like beliefs that are much less scientific.[58] Lastly, there was the mysterious Captain Charles Johnson who wrote *A General History of the Pyrats*. Numerous theories exist that center on Johnson's identity, but the only thing that is certain is he had firsthand knowledge of many of the pirates of the eighteenth century, leading some to speculate that he himself was one. There is much difficulty in verifying this, and Johnson's attitude towards pirates shifts throughout his book, at times vilifying pirates such as when he described Blackbeard's death, "Thus it was these wretches passed their lives with very little

[56] Charles Johnson, *A General History of the Pirates* (Columbia: Gannet Games, 2018), 303-305.
[57] William Dampier, *The voyages and adventures of Capt. William Dampier. Wherein are described the inhabitants, manners, customs, Trade, Harbours, Soil, Animals, Vegetables, &c. of the principal Countries, Islands, &c. of Asia, Africa, and America,* Vol. 1 (London: 1776), 58.
[58] Exquemelin, *The Buccaneers of America*, 47-52.

pleasure or satisfaction, in the possession of what they violently take away from others, and sure to pay for it at last, by an ignominious death."[59] In other parts of his book, Johnson glorifies the pirates when describing a fictional pirate utopia on Madagascar through the eyes of the fictional Captain Misson.[60]

Dampier had his hand in more business ventures than just piracy and books as well; in one case Dampier planned to use an individual he had acquired at sea to make a profit. During his circumnavigation, he encountered a man named Jeoly, the painted prince, among the Nicobar Islands.[61] Through a series of dealings, Dampier acquired Jeoly whom he believed could be shown throughout England as an oddity as he looked more than out of the ordinary to the average British citizen at the time:

> He was painted all down his breast, between his shoulders behind; on his thighs (mostly) before; and in the form of several broad rings or bracelets around his arms and legs. I cannot liken the drawings to any figure of animals, or the like, but they were very curious, full of great variety of lines, flourishes, chequered work, &c. keeping a very graceful proportion and appearing very artificial, even to wonder, especially that upon and between his shoulder-blades.[62]

In many ways, this is similar to pirates producing novels. They were taking something gained by their time in lands far removed from Europe in order to support themselves

[59] Johnson, *A General History of the Pirates*, 41.
[60] Johnson, *A General History of the Pirates*, 278.
[61] The Nicobar Islands are in the Andaman sea, south of Myanmar (or Burma).
[62] William Dampier, *The voyages and adventures of Capt. William Dampier. Wherein are described the inhabitants, manners, customs, Trade, Harbours, Soil, Animals, Vegetables, &c. of the principal Countries, Islands, &c. of Asia, Africa, and America*, Vol. 2 (London: 1776), 357.

upon returning home. Unfortunately, Dampier made little upon his initial return from his voyage and was forced to sell Jeoly for "want of money."[63]

Before Dampier's book went to print, and his luck completely changed with it, he and a fellow buccaneer attempted another interesting business: speculating. In Damper's era, Scotland was, for all intents and purposes, an independent state, and in an attempt to increase both its power and status it desired a colony, and pirates like Dampier proved to be an invaluable resource.[64] As pirates traveled around the globe, they encountered numerous regions and had in depth knowledge surrounding the climate, harbors, topography, and numerous other factors of value to potential colonies.[65] Dampier and another pirate recommended that the Scottish set their colony in an area called Darien, in the isthmus of Panama. Though not directly aimed at Dampier, English officials attempted to discredit this newborn Scottish colony, spreading rumors that it was being established as a pirate nest for the Scots to cause havoc and disrupt merchants in the West Indies. While this was not literally true, newborn colonies were quite well known to produce pirates, and it is entirely likely the colony could have produced them, had it not collapsed soon after its creation.

Despite what one would expect, pirates aiding in the formation of new colonies was actually somewhat common. As Drake sailed up the west coast of America looking for the North West Passage, he landed somewhere in California and claimed the land as "Nova Albion" in the name of England.[66] Though, for logistical reasons, no permanent

[63] Diana and Michael Preston, *A Pirate of Exquisite Mind* (New York: Berkley Books, 2004), 218.
[64] Preston, *A Pirate of Exquisite Mind,* 226-227.
[65] Lionel Wafer, *A new voyage and description of the isthmus of America… The second edition. To which are added, The natural history of those parts* (London: 1704), 35-63.
[66] Sugden, *Sir Francis Drake*, 135.

settlement could be established so far from England itself at the time. Perhaps most famously, Sir Walter Raleigh established the Roanoke colony. Raleigh was beyond well-known in his own time for his literary success, his own attempts to establish colonies in the Americas, and military success against enemies of England. Unfortunately, his colony was most certainly one of his failures and now holds its own place in American mythology for the mysterious disappearance of its colonists.[67] In some ways, the utter disaster of Roanoke can be attributed to Raleigh never actually being there and thus not having any actual knowledge of the area he was trying to see settled. This hostile environment, compounded with their pleas for supplies falling on deaf ears until it was too late, doomed the venture.

Lastly is the avenue of politics that was earlier touched on in the discussion of Morgan. While piracy was an unsavory business to many, in earlier centuries it was under the guise of privateering, and thus pirates could style themselves more as nationalistic soldiers of their homelands, something that could give quite the political boost. Who better to govern a colony on the edge of an empire than the privateer who had been protecting said colony his entire career? Though, playing the game of politics came with its own risks. Raleigh for instance played this game extensively only to be executed in order to placate Spain once he had attacked a fort in Guiana without express permission.[68] In order to illustrate just how complex these seventeenth century politics could become, it should be noted that prior to his execution Raleigh had been sentenced

[67] For clarity, this is the same Sir Walter Raleigh that is known for his poems and other writing in the world of English literature. "Sir Walter Raleigh," Fort Raleigh National Historic Site, National Park Service, last modified December 15, 2016, https://www.nps.gov/people/walterraleigh.htm.
[68] The region of "Guiana" includes modern day Venezuela, Guyana, and Suriname. Sir. Walter Raleigh, "The tryal of Sir Walter Raleigh Kt. With his speech on the scaffold" (London, 1719), 46.

to death for treason in 1603 and as such had already been legally dead for several years, yet had been allowed to search for gold in South America in 1616.[69] This excursion is when the incident occurred in Guiana, and his sentence was finally carried out, fifteen years after it had been given.

Unfortunately for all pirates, low life expectancy, and increasing state prosecutions by the turn of the eighteen century, made it difficult to attempt any of these new careers. This was especially true for later pirates after the passing of the "Act for the more effectuall Suppressions of Piracy" in 1698.[70] Prior to this, trying pirates was a difficult affair that required taking the arrested pirate to London and gathering witnesses who could be anywhere on the planet by time the pirate had been captured, but now a trial could be quickly performed anywhere in the colonies. Additionally, the act detailed punishment for governors who ignored it, meaning that some of the pirates' greatest benefactors were now forced to either arrest or to avoid any association with them. This drastic shift was not lost on pirates, such as John Quelch, a New-England based pirate, who at the gallows in 1704 remarked with distain, "When Lambert was Warning the Spectators to beware of Bad-Company… They should also take care how they brought Money into New-England, to be Hanged for it!"[71] Even prior to this, some governors,

[69] Mathew Lyons, "'The rankest traitor in all England?' Walter Ralegh on trial," *History Extra*, October 2018, https://www.historyextra.com/period/stuart/sir-walter-ralegh-raleigh-elizabeth-i-james-vi-i-bye-main-plot-trial-winchester-was-he-guilty-treason-how-did-he-die-execution/.

[70] "William III, 1698-9: An Act for the more effectuall Suppressions of Piracy. [Chapter VII. Rot. Parl. 11 Gul. III. p. 2. n. 5.]," in *Statutes of the Realm: Volume 7, 1695-1701*, ed. John Raithby (s.l: Great Britain Record Commission, 1820), 590-594.

[71] Lambert was another pirate that had been captured and executed with Quelch, but was far more repentant and had warned the crowd around the execution to beware of bad company. "An account of the behaviour and last dying speeches of the six pirates, that were executed on Charles River, Boston side on Fryday June 30th . Viz. Capt. John Quelch, John Lambert, Christopher Scudamore, John Miller, Erasmus Peterson and Pet" (Boston: 1704).

such as the once buccaneer Henry Morgan, had begun hunting pirates in order to better protect their investments in the now booming sugar industry in England's West Indian colonies.[72] Frankly, the world had changed with little warning and the change was most certainly unfavorable to pirates.

Thankfully for pirates in this period, they had something of a saving grace. The English government often offered "Acts of Grace" that would essentially pardon any pirate that was willing to come forward and renounce their former way of life. These proclamations presented a perfect opportunity for illicit pirates to return home. Perhaps the most surprising aspect of the acts was that they even allowed pirates to retain any wealth they had gathered during their time at sea. In truth the point of these acts was twofold. While the first effect of an immediate decrease in pirate activity was obvious, the second effect was somewhat less intuitive. These acts were often shortly before periods of war. Thus, the acts of grace were a method by which to suddenly increase the manpower available to the English navy. In a time period where England had trouble stretching itself enough to protect its sprawling empire, the pirates were handy weapons in times of need.

It seems that some pirate crews even planned ahead in the hopes that one of these acts of grace would facilitate returning home while maintaining their fortunes. In one set of piratical articles, from 1723, the provision exists: "[If] at any time we shall hear from England and have an account of an Act of Grace they that are a mind to receive it shall go

[72] Henry Morgan, "Letter to St. Jago de la Vega," in *Piracy in the Early Modern Era: An Anthology Series,* ed. and trans. By Kris Lane and Arne Bialuschewski (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2019), 93-94.

with their money and goods and the rest have the privateer."[73] In many ways, an Act of Grace was a golden opportunity: all the spoils of "going on the account" with little of the repercussions. Additionally, with the constant flux of European politics dragging nations in and out of war, the likelihood of an Act of Grace wiping away one's criminal record did not seem too farfetched. Even if an Act of Grace was not immediately incoming, it was also plausible that a governor, or handful of governors, would form some type of pardon to alleviate local issues of piracy.[74] These more local acts were all the more necessary as English naval presence in the West Indies was often non-existent. Even when governors had naval support, it could be fleeting because naval captains frequently dabbled in quasi-legal merchant operations with their men-of-war.[75]

Yet, an Act of Grace also created some issues for pirates with a desire to return to legal civilian life, because other pirates may have resented their decision. When the news of an Act of Grace first reached Nassau, on the island of New Providence, the pirates immediately split into two factions: one pro-pardon and the other anti-pardon.[76] The pro-pardon faction was largely made up of forced men, individuals forced to join the pirates against their will, and once-privateers who had become pirates almost accidentally following the War of Spanish Succession's end.[77] Meanwhile, the anti-pardon faction

[73] In this case "the privateer" is referring to the ship itself rather than an individual. "Articles made on board the Good Fortune," in *Piracy in the Early Modern Era: An Anthology Series*, ed. and trans. By Kris Lane and Arne Bialuschewski, 144-145.
[74] "America and West Indies: December 1700, 26-31", in *Calendar of State Papers Colonial, America and West Indies: Volume 18, 1700*, ed. Cecil Headlam (London, 1910), pp. 766-775. *British History Online,* accessed March 31, 2020, http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/colonial/america-west-indies/vol18/pp766-775.
[75] Woodard, *The Republic of Pirates*, 267-272.
[76] Woodard, *The Republic of* Pirates, 228-230.
[77] While "forced men" may sound cruel and unusual, it was rather common in the age of sail for both navies and pirates.

was made up of Jacobites and pirates who rejected the idea of returning to their old lives under English law. Eventually, those of the anti-pardon faction scattered throughout the Caribbean, east coast of North America, and the Indian Ocean. Yet, they only left New Providence with the arrival of the Bahamas new governor, Woodes Rogers, who brought a handful of English warships to help make and then keep the peace on the island.[78]

For pirates that did not, or could not, wait for the Act of Grace, there was really only one option if you wanted to go home: hide. Some pirates, such as the aforementioned Walter Kennedy, the pirate who had hoped to become a sovereign after reading about pirates who had become "independent princes," were able to escape into England without notice. Kennedy was able to use his fortune from pirating to establish a bar in England, until being recognized by someone he had robbed as a pirate and arrested.[79] Thus, a pirate rejoining their society of old necessitated them to keep a low profile.

Perhaps the most famous case of a pirate disappearing with his fortune was Henry Avery, whose exact fate is still unknown in modern day. Avery's exploits as a pirate were among the most well-known of any pirate in the Golden Age. After taking the *Ganj-i Sawai*, a ship belonging to a prominent East Indian merchant and full of treasure, Avery became one of the most wanted men in the world. Yet, he somehow disappeared into Ireland without a trace. Charles Johnson proposes a story about Avery being tricked by a

[78] "America and West Indies: May 1719," in Calendar of State Papers Colonial, America and West Indies: Volume 31, 1719-1720, ed. Cecil Headlam (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1933), 85-101. *British History Online*, accessed March 29, 2020, http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/colonial/america-west-indies/vol31/pp85-101.

[79] "Walter Kennedy, 'Walter Kennedy's views on the pirate life,' in *The Weekly Journal*: or *British Gazetteer*, 29 July, 1721." in *Pirates in Their Own Words*, ed. By E.T. Fox (Raleigh: Lulu Press, 2014), 113-117.

group of English merchants, but the story seems odd as it purports that Avery's only large quantity of wealth from the *Ganj-i Sawai* was a bag full of gems and that he would trust the alleged entirety of his wealth to a pair of merchants.[80]

It is difficult to ascertain exactly how many pirates were able to return to the society of old in hiding, because, those who succeeded would disappear from the historical record. For instance, the crew of John Evans split up upon his death with 300 lbs. each, enough money for each of them to start a new life, but there is no record of what they did afterward, whether it was to continue pirating or attempt to retire from piracy.[81] When Kennedy was arrested he gave up the names of twelve of his former associates in an attempt to earn a pardon, yet even with specific information on more than half of them, the authorities could only capture one.[82] While an incredibly small sample size, if the authorities could only find two of these pirates, many more could have escaped into England, living in secret until their dying day. In one instance a pirate in hiding even wrote in to a English newspaper to inquire as to how to publish his journals without having his identity revealed: "For as soon as ever it comes to light, I shall be found out, and am then sure to be hang'd."[83]

Interestingly, Blackbeard found something in the middle between hiding, retirement, and continuing piracy that was similar to the buccaneering that had been sponsored by colonial governments in previous decades. Blackbeard, whose real name

[80] Johnson, *A General History of the Pirates*, 21-22.
[81] Johnson, *A General History of the Pirates,* 213.
[82] The pirate the authorities were able to find was James Bradshaw, who was found guilty, but pardoned for reasons unknown. "Walter Kennedy, 'Walter Kennedy's views on the pirate life,' in *The Weekly Journal*: or *British Gazetteer*, 29 July, 1721.*"* in *Pirates in Their Own Words*, ed. by E.T. Fox, 110-112.
[83] "*The British Apollo,* 2 June 1708," in Pirates in Their Own Words, ed. by E.T. Fox, 78-81.

was Edward Teach, was a pirate operating in the early eighteenth century, and was considered one of the most infamous pirates at New Providence island. After purposely running his ship aground on a sandbar, Blackbeard marooned a number of his crew on a nearby shore and took his remaining ship, with all its valuables, to the town of Bath, North Carolina, in search of a pardon from the current Act of Grace.[84] Here he found what was essentially the perfect place for a pirate to retire and lay low while England's current pirate hunting fever ran its course. With the hundred men in his ship landing in Bath, the town's population doubled.

While the majority of Blackbeard's men dispersed into North America, in full enjoyment of their new legality, Blackbeard took a different route.[85] For the first few weeks, it had seemed that Blackbeard had truly retired. At times he even went to local taverns, in the words of Charles Johnson, "[diverting] himself with going ashore among the planters, where he reveled night and day. By these he was well received, but whether out of love or fear, I cannot say."[86] One can imagine Blackbeard as a local celebrity, regaling those he encountered with fantastical stories of adventures at sea, with tankard in hand. Perhaps this even explains why some of his peculiar activities are well known to

[84] There is still modern debate as to whether or not Blackbeard's running aground of his own ship was purposeful, but if nothing else his contemporaries largely believed so. Stede Bonnet, Peter Force, and South Carolina Court Of Vice-Admiralty, *The tryals of Major Stede Bonnet and other pirates, viz. Robert Tucker, Edward Robinson, Neal Paterson, William Scot, Job Bayley, John-William Smith, Thomas Carman, John Thomas, William Morrison, William Livers alias Evis, Samuel Booth, William Hewet, John Levit, William Eddy alias Nedy, Alexander Annand, George Ross, George Dunkin, John Ridge, Matthew King, Daniel Perry, Henry Virgin, James Robbins, James Mullet alias Millet, Thomas Price, John Lopez, Zachariah Long, James Wilson, John Brierly, and Robert Boyd, who were all condemn'd for piracy: as also, the tryals of Thomas Nicols, Rowland Sharp, Jonathan Clarke, and Thomas Gerrat for piracy, who were acquitted at the Admiralty Sessions held at Charles-Town in the province of South Carolina, on Tuesday the 28th of October , and by several adjournments continued to Wednesday the 12th of November following: to which is prefix'd an account of the taking of the said Major Bonnet and the rest of the pirates*, (London: Printed for Benj. Cowse, 1719), https://lccn.loc.gov/33008758;

[85] Woodard, *The Republic of Pirates*, 258.

[86] Johnson, *A General History of the Pirates*, 34.

this day, such as setting his own beard on fire, the story of him challenging crewmen to outlast him below the hold of his ship with a fire lit, or the devil himself walking amongst his crew.[87] Though Johnson hints that the farmers may have been jovial towards Blackbeard out of fear, in truth pirates were often seen as heroes to colonial settlers. Citizens of Charleston, South Carolina even rioted in order to free Stede Bonnet from prison after his capture.[88] Besides Blackbeard's casual drinking, it was during this time that he married a local girl.[89] Despite all these signs of settling down into a normal life in colonial America, Blackbeard was still pirating while in Bath. In fact, he was using the same governor that had supplied his pardon as a fence and had "in this time cultivated a very good understanding with Charles Eden, Esq., the Governor above mentioned."[90]

Whenever Blackbeard captured a vessel during this time, he presented it to the admiralty board as though he had found the ship adrift at sea, with loot included, and wished to claim it as salvage. This method represented a very round-about way of privateering. The board was all too happy to aid in the procedure and take their cut as a result.[91] In a strange way this was similar to the buccaneering of old; a symbiotic relationship between the pirate and his governor. For Blackbeard, it was a way to earn

[87] Johnson, *A General History of the Pirates*, 40-41.
[88] While this may seem odd, it pays to recall that this was in 1718, only a little over fifty years before the American Revolution. As a result, pirates were seen as men brave enough to strike at the imperial powers whose popularity was beginning to corrode in colonial America, beginning with the "underclass" citizens. Woodard, *The Republic of Pirates*, 298-299;
[89] Woodard, *The Republic of Pirates*, 258.
[90] In Lee's book he argues that historians have misunderstood the laws relating to naval seizure and thus have misappropriated a great deal of infamy to Governor Eden. Lee, having been a professor of law, makes the argument that Eden's ties to Blackbeard were largely circumstantial and legally within reason. Though, even if Eden was unaware of Blackbeard's exact activities and legality, he was still being used by the pirate. Johnson, *A General History of the Pirates*, 33; Robert E. Lee, *Blackbeard the Pirate*, (Winston-Salem: John F. Blair, 2011), 83.
[91] Lee, *Blackbeard the Pirate*, 80-81.

money, both for himself and the remains of his crew, and to stay occupied without traveling too far from his new home and wife.

Unfortunately, the turning of political gears ruined Blackbeard's colonial paradise. In the colony of Virginia, Governor Alexander Spotswood was facing backlash and accusations of corruption. As Blackbeard's activities began to become well known in his colony, Spotswood saw an opportunity to gain political favor by eliminating such a high profile enemy of the colonial elite.[92] In perhaps the most intense battle recorded between pirates and government forces in North America, the pirate was killed by an agent of Spotswood who "cut Blackbeard's head off, which [he] put on [his] Bowspright[sic], in order to carry it to Virginia."[93] Thus, another pirate was killed by officials adapting to changing political circumstances. From the point of view of many, Blackbeard's killing was actually illegal. For all intents and purposes, the colony of Virginia had just invaded and killed a citizen of Carolina. Through shrewd letters and the recent death of England's monarch, Spotswood was able to avoid further persecution. However, the incident had caused him political damage.[94]

Blackbeard's death in Carolina mattered much more than the death of a single pirate normally would. Even though he played all his cards right and legitimized his activities, an agent of the governor still had him assassinated. Nothing of the old buccaneering system, which had once protected England's New World holdings,

[92] Woodard, *The Republic of Pirates*, 282-283.
[93] John Maynard, "'Mr. Maynard to Mr Symonds, 17 December, 1718,' Printed in *The Weekly Journal,* or *British Gazetteer*, 25 April, 1719." In *Pirates in Their Own Words*, 376-378.
[94] Lee, *Blackbeard the Pirate*, 127-134.

remained. From this point forward, any pirate that continued their illicit activities was entirely on their own.

People like Condent, Dampier, Exquemelin, and Johnson surrendered the freedoms they had gained through piracy and chose to live the lives of average citizens. Pirates who were not in a favorable time to return to society and hide, such as Walter Kennedy, found varying degrees of success. Simply rejoining society under a low profile was relatively safe when one was tired of putting their life on the line for plunder or lost their appetite for the freedoms of piracy. This was especially true with helpful governors or royal proclamations doling out Acts of Grace. In many ways, Blackbeard had attempted to retain all his freedom and still retain the benefits of piracy. This resulted in him drawing too much attention and becoming a target. To retire from piracy required one to give things up. Blackbeard refused to do that, which lead in his death.

Chapter 3: A New Society, a More… Piratical One!

For pirates that did not want to "go home" and live normal lives, a new place to call home seemed to be one of the last options available. Throughout the period referred to as the Age of Sail, there was a fear amongst Western powers that if colonies continued to rely on piracy, they could become something governments were unable to control. The contemporary economist Charles Davenant once wrote that the colonies "may erect themselves into Independent Commonwealths, or Pyratical Societies, which at last we shall not be able to Master." [95] Initially, the idea of pirate countries cropping up may seem odd or preposterous, but people from the Age of Sail believed in them whole heartedly. The way in which pirates operated was congruent to state building, the fact that all pirate ships had a constitution-like list of articles governing them illustrates this well. Each ship then was, in many ways, its own mobile state drifting from place to place for supplies and plunder, but largely solitary for large periods of time. Thus, you could see a pirate ship as a sort of petri-dish, filled with numerous nationalities and ideas, that slowly grew its own systems of governance. The only thing missing then was land on which to build their new society. Thus far, few historical works have focused specifically on piratical states or societies and often when they do, it is more in passing than in in-depth discussion. Mark G. Hanna's *Pirate Nests* is close, but it focuses more on the growth of

[95] For clarity, Charles Davenant's book, from which this quote is taken, was published in 1698. Charles Davenant, *Discourses on the Publick Revenues, and on the Trade of England*, found in Mark G. Hanna, *Pirate Nests and the Rise of the British Empire,* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 15.

English colonial development through piracy than pirates' own attempts at state building.[96]

No place in the eighteenth century was more associated with piracy than Madagascar. In 1709, the island was so infested with pirates, that the English government considered an Act of Grace just for it alone, stating it as the only possible solution as "it seems morally impossible to reduce them by force… should any superior force be sent to reduce them, they might readily march up far into the country and be safe."[97] A possible ex-buccaneer named Adam Baldridge was almost certainly the first to use Madagascar as a pirate haunt. Baldridge was not interested in establishing his own fully independent state, but was much more focused on creating a sort of pirate trading post in Madagascar with connections to American colonies for the purposes of supplies.[98] Through these connections, he could obtain supplies for pirates that were previously impossible to get for wanted criminals in the Indian Ocean. In many ways this revolutionized piracy in the East Indies as now pirates could resupply without taking a full trip back to America, saving months' worth of time.

Baldridge's time in Madagascar began with a journey to collect slaves for sale, but after an initial attack from a group of natives and what he describes as a "war" with them he "had a house built and settled upon St. Maries, where great store of Negros

[96] Mark G. Hanna, *Pirate Nests and the Rise of the British Empire* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 3-5.

[97] "America and West Indies: December 1709, 1-15," in *Calendar of State Papers Colonial, America and West Indies: Volume 24, 1708-1709*, ed. Cecil Headlam (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1922), 540-556. *British History Online*, accessed March 6, 2020, http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/colonial/america-west-indies/vol24/pp540-556.

[98] "Disposition of Adam Baldridge, May 5, 1699. CO 5/1042, no. 30ii," in *Privateering and Piracy*, ed. John F. Jameson (New York: Macmillan Company, 1923; Project Gutenberg, 2008), 180-187. http://www.gutenberg.org/files/24882/24882-h/24882-h.htm#Page_180

resorted to me from the Island Madagascar and settled the Island St. Maries, where I lived quietly with them." Additionally, during his time there Baldrige occupied himself with "helping them [the natives] to redeem their wives and Children that were taken before my coming to St. Maries by other Negros to the northward of us."[99] While Baldridge was maintaining his connections with the colonies that supplied him, he had also put himself into an entirely different world of native Malagasy affairs. It is an ironic twist that Baldridge had come in order to enslave, but ended up aiding in the emancipation of some.

While Baldrige's life with the natives was unusual, he still continued in his normal activities. Baldrige's situation reveals just how willing some pirates were to accept alternative societies. Baldridge seemed largely unaware of how unique a lifestyle he had adopted. Despite the brief mention of his living among the Malagasy in peace, most of Baldridge's disposition is occupied with describing his trade with pirates, or in his words "privateers." This largely makes sense as Baldrige had come to Madagascar for trade, his life with the natives was largely incidental.

As pirate voyages failed or splintered, the white population of St. Mary's increased. Baldridge gained more permanent customers for trade, but also gained rowdy neighbors with far less regard for the Malagasy than he had. After going to other parts of Madagascar to establish more trade for his outpost on St. Mary's, another ship's captain stopped Baldridge as he returned. The captain warned that thirty white men had been killed by the natives and everything on the island taken by them. He was informed that

[99] "Disposition of Adam Baldridge, May 5, 1699. CO 5/1042, no. 30ii," in *Privateering and Piracy*, ed. John F. Jameson, 180-187.

some of the newer white settlers were "chiefly the occasion of the natives riseing, by their abuseing of the Natives and takeing their Cattel from them."[100] With his home destroyed and relations irreparably soured, Baldridge returned to America. Baldridge's customers-turned-settlers proved to be the downfall of the peaceful life he had found on his remote island as they angered the native hosts Baldridge had courted.

While Baldridge's presence was noteworthy in his own time, Madagascar became most famous as a pirate hotbed following the sensationalization of Henry Avery's activities there. Avery was already famous from his taking of the *Ganj-i-Sawai*, the incredibly large Indian vessel that was considered the haul of his generation. Yet it was the news outlets' embellishment of his actions on Madagascar that pushed him into myth. In truth, Avery only stopped at Madagascar for a short time in order to plan his next move, but English news outlets were absolutely convinced that he had established a pirate kingdom.[101] Why exactly they clung to this delusion is unclear. Prior to the publishing of Charles Johnson's *General History* there was really no alternative explanation for what had happened to Avery, and news agency understood just how valuable a sensationalized story could be.[102] In some cases, poems, stories, and song were even attributed to Avery, perpetuating this myth. One opened with stanzas of recruitment:

> COme [sic] all you brave Boys, whose Courage is bold, / Will you venture with me, I'll glut you with Gold? / Make haste unto Corona, a Ship you will find, / That's called the Fancy, will pleasure your mind. // Captain Every is in her, and

[100] "Disposition of Adam Baldridge, May 5, 1699. CO 5/1042, no. 30ii," in *Privateering and Piracy,* ed. John F. Jameson, 180-187.
[101] Colin Woodard, *The Republic of Pirates: Being the True and Surprising Story of the Caribbean Pirates and the Man Who Brought Them Down* (Boston: Mariner Books, 2007), 23, 26-27.
[102] Charles Johnson, *A General History of the Pirates* (Columbia: Gannet Games, 2018), 26.

calls her his own; / He will box her about, Boys, before he has done: / French, Spaniard and Portuguese, the Heathen likewise, / He has made a War with them until that he dies.[103]

Works like this are what convinced Walter Kennedy to go to sea.[104] He was not alone in this motivation. Historian Margarette Lincoln concludes that "[Avery's] escapades, reworked, colored, exaggerated, and obfuscated, helped to create a burgeoning pirate literature."[105] So, while fictional, Avery's pirate kingdom had immeasurable influence on public opinions on piracy and even inspired a real pirate kingdom to emerge.

Avery's legend set a fire under those already considering piracy, giving them a dream to aspire to. Many pirates set out to become the next Avery. Sometime around 1719, a pirate named John Plantain and several others landed on Madagascar and Plantain declared himself "King of Ranter Bay," with obvious inspiration from Avery's legend. Despite what would be expected, Plantain was received well by the natives in his dominion and they would reportedly "commonly sing Songs in praise of Plantain."[106] The pirate's life here was incredibly similar to what one would expect of a monarch, including a home in "as commodious a manner as the Nature of the Place would admit" as well as an assortment of concubines named "Moll, Kate, Sue, or Pegg. These women

[103] "A COPY of VERSES, COMPOSED BY Captain Henry Every, LATELY Gone to SEA to seek his FORTUNE," English Ballad Broadside Archive (London: Printed for Theophilus Lewis, 1696?), *English Ballad Broadside Archive,* accessed March 31, 2020. http://ebba.english.ucsb.edu/ballad/22206/xml.
[104] Walter Kennedy was the pirate who attempted to hide in London and had bought a bar with his pirate spoils, discussed in Chapter 2.
[105] Margarette Lincoln, "Henry Every and the Creation of the Pirate Myth in Early Modern Britain," in *The Golden Age of Piracy*, ed. David Head (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2018), 169.
[106] Clement Downing, *A compendious history of the Indian Wars… By Clement Downing, Midshipman on board the Salisbury; afterwards Lieutenant of the Victory Frigate, Fame Gally, and Revenge Grab, part of the Squndron employ'd by the East-India Company to attack Angria; and sometime Engineer in the Service of the Great Mogul* (London: 1737), 114.

were dressed in the richest silks, and some of them had Diamond Necklaces." Additionally, in his free time Plantain would repair fortifications on St. Mary's that he believed remained from Avery's kingdom.[107] Most interestingly, this was all happening to an illiterate man from Jamaica. Even when compared to Drake, no pirate ever ascended in status as much as Plantain. While Drake went from commoner in England to national hero and legislator, Plantain went from commoner in a colony to king of his own dominion in a foreign land.

Interestingly, Plantain adopted native Malagasy tradition to his advantage. For instance, the natives had a method of forming agreements, and breaking such agreements was punishable by an excruciating death. The agreement would be sealed by drinking sea water together and then they would make their pledge to one another; Plantain used this practice on most of his allies, binding them to his service.[108] While of course this tradition was useful to Plantain and why he chose to adopt it, he was also illustrating a greater shift into Malagasy culture. Plantain's oaths, whether conscious of it or not, represented a melding of his own colonial society with that of the Malagasy. His piratical kingdom was something more than just his remote island wonderland; the Malagasy had an effect on him just as he did on them.[109]

Yet, much of Plantain's kingdom was still bogged down with the arbitrary nature of historical monarchies and the violence that often accompanied pirates. While being the

[107] Downing, *A compendious history of the Indian Wars*, 115-116.
[108] Downing, *A compendious history of the Indian Wars,* 123.
[109] The Malagasy had actually been in contact with Europeans long before even Baldrige lived there, with the island being "discovered" by the Portuguese in 1506 and a large portion of the population having become "a dark mulatto race," meaning they knew full well the men they dealt with. Johnson, *A General History of the Pirates*, 67.

strongest, Plantain was not the only Pirate King on Madagascar. These pirates still had to play the game of politics. Now these political games were with one another rather than with kings, queens, or colonial governors. In one instance, the base desires of Plantain resulted in an island wide war. One of the native kings was named (by the pirates) Long Dick and he had a grand-daughter of mixed race. Plantain became enthralled with her and demanded that Long Dick consent to their marriage, but, at the urging of some of the other pirates, he refused and Plantain went to war.[110] In this war every pirate took a side.

Although often seen as emblems of resistance to the imperial system that had created them, these pirate kings proved to be equally, if not more, petty than the countries they had left. Whereas Plantain would use a woman as his excuse for an island-wide war, England would use a man's severed ear to initiate a war only a decade later in The War of Jenkin's Ear beginning in 1739.[111] These conflicts perpetrated by the pirate kings were only different from the foolhardy wars of Europe in their scope and perceived prestige.

Even though they were now fully removed from mercenary work as surrogate naval forces, they still created chaos and violence. As the war dragged on, Ranter Bay, and all of Madagascar, destabilized. Every time Plantain would move to attack, he would have to retreat to defend his home due to the attacks of other "piratical kings," who saw his assaults as opportunities.[112] Additionally, as all of this was happening, executions were somewhat constant. Plantain was running a fledgling kingdom in a time of war and it seems he saw executions as a swift and definitive solution. For those he did not execute, he waited until fortune saw fit to send a trading vessel and would offload his

[110] Downing, *A compendious history of the Indian Wars*, 116.
[111] David A. Norris, "The War of Jenkins' Ear," *History Magazine* 16, no. 6 (2015): 31.
[112] Downing, *A compendious history of the Indian Wars*, 130.

Malagasy prisoners of war as slaves, boosting his economy and virtually removing any chance of enemies returning to cause him further harm as his empire expanded.[113] This pirate paradise was nothing more than a handful of warring states. In this case pirate retirement was not an ideal sunset on a beach; it was just more warfare and bloodshed.

The final years of Plantain's life, unfortunately, are lost to history, though we know the general direction he took from his island kingdom. Eventually, Plantain emerged victorious and found himself in control of all of Madagascar and in possession of the now deceased King Long Dick's granddaughter. The pirate king even possessed vassals, which he used to control and rebuild the large island that had been savaged by his war for a woman.[114] For reasons not entirely clear, Plantain then saw fit to leave, but not to return to Western Civilization. Through a ploy of constructing a fishing boat to boost Ranter Bay's food supply, Plantain secretly loaded all of his war spoils and his newly acquired bride and escaped into India where no further record of him exists.[115] The reasons for Plantain's leaving are largely ambiguous, but the chaos that a handful of pirates caused on the island is remarkable, if terrifying. Clement Downings, the sole source on Plantain's life during his time in Madagascar, speculated that he wanted to leave:

> Either urg'd to it by the remorse of his own conscience, or acting on the principle of self-preservation (which is most likely) as he found his associates [the pirates]

[113] Downing, *A compendious history of the Indian Wars,* 132-133.
[114] Downing, *A compendious history of the Indian Wars,* 129.
[115] Downing, *A compendious history of the Indian Wars,* 136-138.

> decrease daily and could not depend on the fidelity of the natives, whom he had used in so barbarous a manner.[116]

If Downing's second guess is correct, then it would seem Plantain had destroyed his "off the grid" retirement spot and was forced to keep looking as he sailed to India. His attempts at dominion had, in fact, destroyed any hope of him living in peace on the remote island.

Plantain's kingdom and his administration of it reveal a great deal about pirates and their principles, or lack thereof in retirement or otherwise. Many historians have interpreted that pirates as a reaction of underpaid seamen to being at the mercy of imperial powers. Yet, Plantain's own fiefdom shared striking similarities with those imperial powers, despite its reclusive nature.[117] If nothing else, Plantain reveals the exact extent of what piracy could do for a commoner no matter the era they lived in. It represented something else, an opportunity to be more than a laborer operating under a colonial governor. Still, a country all their own, with landed pirates acting as benevolent rulers appears to have been nothing more than a fantasy to sell stories and broadsides. Pirates were violent individuals, they profited from and survived due to that violence, they were not in a favorable position to become state builders, bureaucrats, or diplomats.

Despite Madagascar being the largest pirate kingdom, other islands played host to pirate nests, and few were as famous as New Providence Island. Nestled amongst the many islands of the Bahamas, New Providence had both a natural bay and the perfect position in relation to shipping lanes to be a pirate outpost. Established as a pirate nest by

[116] Downing, *A compendious history of the Indian Wars*, 136.
[117] Marcus Rediker, *Villains of All Nations* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2004), 176.

a group of pirates who called themselves "The Flying Gang," New Providence was never carved into fiefdoms like Madagascar. Though the pirates who resided there dreamed of it reaching such a level of pirate activity, as one pirate who claimed to be its governor said he would "make it a second Madagascar."[118] This sentiment was not only found amongst the pirates, but also some colonial governors who echoed it in their writing on the danger that New Providence posed to colonial trade routes and possibly even the administration of their islands and colonies if the pirates continued to swell in power and number.[119]

While history leaves the exact machinations of New Providence's government ambiguous, it seems to have functioned as a quasi-republic with the strongest captain at the time having the most power. For instance, upon obtaining what was described as a sloop-of-war, Benjamin Hornigold, a privateer turned pirate after The War of Spanish Succession, informed the pirates on the island that they were "under his personal protection." He then proceeded to threaten the life of one of the island's inhabitants who had previously proved troublesome for the pirates.[120] Additionally, upon the Act of Grace reaching the pirates at New Providence, they held a council amongst themselves, though no actual agreement arose from it.[121] At the very least then, they continued to use the democratic system they had employed in their piratical articles.

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[118] "John Vickers, 'John Vickers describes the arrival of the pirates at New Providence, Bahamas,' *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial series,* 1716-1717, item. 240.i" in *Pirates in Their Own Words,* ed. by E.T. Fox (Raleigh: Lulu Press, 2014), 363-365.
[119] Mark G. Hanna, *Pirate Nests and the Rise of the British Empire* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 367.
[120] Colin Woodard, *The Republic of Pirates: Being the True and Surprising Story of the Caribbean Pirates and the Man Who Brought Them Down* (Boston: Mariner Books, 2007), 113-114.
[121] Woodard, *The Republic of Pirates,* 231.

While New Providence existed more as a place to commit piracy rather than escape and retire from it, this was not always the case. In the rare cases where pirate governments or hideouts existed nearby, they could then act as an alternative mode of quitting piracy. For instance, one account from a non-pirate resident of New Providence, describes a pirate attempting to return home, but planning to come to New Providence in the case of failure, most likely anticipating failure from Jamaican authorities:

> "Capt. Farnandez, an inhabitant of Jamaica… took a Spanish sloop with about three millions of money as it was reported… and brough [sic] the sloop into [New] Providence and there divided the money and goods among the men and is returned to the North side of Jamaica to try whether he many [sic] go home in safety and if he found he could not he gave out that he would return to [New] Providence and settle amongst the Rovers.[122]

This reveals that, to some pirates, returning to society through going incognito or through Acts of Grace was preferable, but more difficult to obtain. In this case people like Captain Farnandez could stop pirating, but perhaps enjoy the lifestyle pirates often did on land, except perpetually.

When the Act of Grace, which pardoned pirates without stipulation, reached the island in 1717, it revealed an intriguing dilemma.[123] Did a majority of pirates agree with Captain Farnandez's preference of returning to their old societies, or should they fight to

[122] "John Vickers, 'John Vickers describes the arrival of the pirates at New Providence, Bahamas,' *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial series*, 1716-1717, item. 240.i" in *Pirates in Their Own Words,* ed. by E.T. Fox, 363-365.

[123] "America and West Indies: May 1721, 16-31," in *Calendar of State Papers Colonial, America and West Indies*: Volume 32, 1720-1721, ed. Cecil Headlam (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1933), 306-329. *British History Online*, accessed February 23, 2020, http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/colonial/america-west-indies/vol32/pp306-329.

maintain this republic they had established for themselves? The answer is difficult to ascertain. Most seemed to believe that there was little hope of actually fighting the English navy, even with all the pirates working together. This led to numerous pirates, who were not necessarily pro-pardon, to take the pardon only in order to clear their names long enough for them to get to their next nest or to enact other plans. Such was the case with Blackbeard. In many cases these pirates did not wait for the new governor to arrive at New Providence, but sailed to nearby colonies to get a head start.[124] Upon the governor reaching the island in late July 1718, there were an estimated 700 pirates still there, and contemporary estimates were that at this time about 2,000 pirates roved the seas.[125] While it is impossible to account for the pirates not based in Providence at the time, it can be assumed that the split between pro-pardons and anti-pardons was relatively even.

Despite many of the anti-pardons fleeing, a pirate named Charles Vane began doing everything within his power to stop the return of English law to New Providence beginning in 1718, when the news of the Act of Grace first reached New Providence. Vane, a pirate largely in the background until news of the pardon, did everything within his power to stop the pro-pardons from facilitating the island's English take-over. In their carousing, the pro-pardons had raised a Union Jack above the island's only fort. Vane led

[124] Woodard, *The Republic of Pirates*, 232.
[125] "America and West Indies: May 1721, 16-31," in *Calendar of State Papers Colonial, America and West Indies*: Volume 32, 1720-1721, ed. Cecil Headlam (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1933), 306-32. *British History Online*, accessed February 23, 2020, http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/colonial/america-west-indies/vol32/pp306-329; Rediker, *Villains of All Nations*, 29.

a team of men to evict the pro-pardons and raised a Jolly Roger in its place as an obvious sign of their allegiance.[126]

Vane's motives were beyond simply wanting pirates to reject the pardon. He had a dream for a pirate colony that existed with the blessing of the English crown, just under a different sovereign. Vane, and many of his compatriots, were Jacobites, individuals who opposed the ascension of George I to the English throne. Technically the throne was supposed to go to James Stuart III, but defaulted to George as English law forbade a Catholic from holding the throne, which James was. Surprisingly, many pirates were politically astute enough to recognize this situation. The crew of Stede Bonnet drank to "the Pretender" King James, and William Snelgrave noticed the same practice during his time as a captive of pirates.[127] The reason for the large concentration of Jacobites in the pirate community is rather complex, but essentially George I, upon his accent to power, immediately removed members of the Tory party from office. Overall, the Tories were considered the party of the lower class, from which most pirates had come. Obviously, this caused discontent among the lower classes in English territories and produced high numbers of Jacobites. This point was made well by historian E.T. Fox who said, "Pirates were as affected by swings in the extent of popular Jacobitism as any other plebeian community," and during this era of piracy's Golden Age, Jacobitism was at its peak.[128] Vane went further than a toast, though, he sent letters to servants of King James, who hid in exile plotting an insurrection. Vane's dream was for the pirates to aid James Stuart in

[126] Woodard, *The Republic of Pirates*, 230.
[127] Rediker, *Villains of All Nations*, 93; William Snelgrave, *A new account of some parts of Guinea, and the slave-trade... A relation of the author's being taken by pirates, and the many Dangers he underwent* (London: 1734), 216.
[128] E.T. Fox, "Jacobitism and the 'Golden Age' of Piracy, 1715–1725," *International Journal of Maritime History* 22, no. 2 (December 2010): 294-295. doi:10.1177/084387141002200212.

his rebellion and be rewarded with New Providence as a semi-autonomous pirate state.[129] Unfortunately for Vane, he did not have the support within the factions of New Providence and his contact in the Stuart court was also unable to give Vane the support he needed. So, Vane cruised about the Bahamas in defiance of the pardon, wishing to build a flotilla powerful enough to challenge the new governor of New Providence, until being removed from his crew for "cowardice" in an engagement with a man-of-war and eventually apprehended by authorities.[130] Vane's life then ended like that of most pirates, from the gallows.[131] His dreams of becoming a revolutionary for both a king he believed in and for the continued existence of a pirate republic never came to fruition.

New Providence showed that a pirate state did not have to exist in a condition of nigh-perpetual chaos like Madagascar. Much like Madagascar, it was at the heart of valuable shipping lanes, yet still within reach of colonial empires. New Providence's proximity with imperial powers lead to inevitable interactions with them, drawing their ire, and leading to the pirate republic's downfall. Then perhaps an independent land of pirates did not need to be tyrannical and bogged down by petty squabbles and baggage. Instead, it could retain the more democratic and populist qualities pirates possessed. New Providence was the mythical thing many pirates had wanted, but it did not last as long as many pirates wanted it to. It seems that joining a pirate kingdom was easier than rejoining a pirate's old society, but beginning and maintaining a pirate state was a herculean task.

Despite Madagascar and New Providence being the only gatherings of pirates in the Golden Age to form sovereign states, numerous other outposts of piracy could be

[129] Woodard, *The Republic of Pirates*, 230-232.
[130] Johnson, *A General History of the Pirates*, 73-75.
[131] Johnson, *A General History of the Pirates*, 75.

found throughout the Atlantic world. Logwood cutters, for instance, were a group made up largely of former mariners (including pirates) who established communities along the Spanish main in both the seventeenth and eighteenth century in an attempt to profit from the valuable wood that grew on that coast. While initially this may seem to be a digression from our topic of piracy, historians such as Kevin P. McDonald have argued this is a misunderstanding of piracy. Piracy itself was more of an umbrella term during the Age of Sail for any sea-related illegal activity, and if the men who were logwood cutting were not pirates before, the Spanish most certainly considered them to be afterwards. This was especially true as, when not logging, the logwood cutters were capturing and plundering ships that sailed near their coast.[132]

Logwood cutting was a profitable business, even without the outright piracy intermingled with it.[133] This was so true in fact that some pirates used logwood cutters as an insurance policy in case of a failed piracy venture, visiting the loggers' camps as a last-ditch effort for profitability.[134] Thus, it is apparent that even if the logwood cutters were "retired" from piracy in the strictest sense, they were still operating within the Atlantic system of piracy. This is not to say that logwood cutting was easy by any means, and at times it was equally, if not more, dangerous than piracy.

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[132] Kevin P. McDonald, "Sailors from the woods: Logwood Cutting and the Spectrum of Piracy," in *The Golden Age of Piracy*, ed. David Head (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2018), 52-54; William Dampier*, The voyages and adventures of Capt. William Dampier. Wherein are described the inhabitants, manners, customs, Trade, Harbours, Soil, Animals, Vegetables, &c. of the principal Countries, Islands, &c. of Asia, Africa, and America,* Vol. 1 (London: 1776), 15.

[133] Jesse Cromwell, "Life on the Margins," *Itinerario* 33, no. 3 (2009): 47, doi:10.1017/S0165115300016259.

[134] Dampier, *The voyages and adventures of Capt. William Dampier…*, Vol. 1, 49.

The manner in which the loggers lived had its own culture about it. Like the pirates of New Providence, they lived under similar rules with inspiration from their piratical articles of old, except these were even more egalitarian. Whereas pirates were governed by a council with elected officials holding power in emergencies, the logwood cutters existed in a flat hierarchy with no steps to equality aside from a short apprenticeship period. [135] Unfortunately, this egalitarian spirit did not extend to every aspect of their society as slavery was common in these logger camps.[136]

Like Baldridge, the logwood cutters had a very mixed relationship with the natives of the Spanish main, largely due to their enslaving of them, but the presence of the Spanish themselves would often facilitate alliances.[137] In many ways the logwood cutters lived in a very similar fashion to the natives. The loggers and natives both lived in easily raised huts, which were often abandoned in the case of a Spanish attack; from here they would retreat further into the woods until the Spanish gave up all hope of capture.[138] Ironically, the loggers had to fear becoming slaves themselves, becoming prisoners in one of Spain's many new world holdings, forced to work.[139]

Outside of the logwood cutters, few other major communities, primarily controlled by pirates, existed.[140] At the river Sierra Leone, about thirty pirates lived, led

[135] Cromwell, "Life on the Margins," 51.
[136] Dampier, *The voyages and adventures of Capt. William Dampier…*, Vol. 1, 56.
[137] Dampier, *The voyages and adventures of Capt. William Dampier…*, Vol. 1, 96-97.
[138] Dampier, *The voyages and adventures of Capt. William Dampier…*, Vol. 1, 96;
[139] Cromwell, "Life on the Margins," 55.
[140] Although it would take much longer than the Golden Age of Piracy, or the entire Age of Sail, the area used by the logwood cutters would eventually become the nation of Belize. At first a British colony before becoming its own nation, the country of Belize was a far cry from what it was during the Golden Age of Piracy, as the social structure and population was much more like other colonies with slave-based economies than the semi-egalitarian system of the loggers. Interestingly, the modern flag of Belize depicts the logwood that these pirates lived their lives around.

by a mysterious ex-buccaneer named Cracker, but only enough information exists to say they lived a "jovial life" and that he, humorously, "[had] two or three guns before his door, with which he salutes his friends."[141] Cracker acted as a merchant with the others in his small community, but little else can be said about these pirates living off the grid.

With this in mind, there is one other community of pirates in retirement that deserves our attention, in the region of Cabo Gracias a Dios inside the Mosquito Coast. Cabo Gracias a Dios did not fall under the dominion of pirates exclusively, acting as a more fully synthesized native-pirate society than either Madagascar or the logwood communities. Often the last two chapters of Exquemelin's book are thrown aside in favor of his observations of Henry Morgan and the pirate attack in which he "himself, of necessity, was present."[142] Yet, in his penultimate chapter, he describes this strange land in modern day Honduras and Nicaragua, "for the Indians who live there trade with the buccaneers and treat them well."[143]

In this region, during the Buccaneering era, the pirates made no attempt to take control, but would settle among the natives and integrate into their society. Occasionally, this integration would be only temporary until they returned to the trade of piracy, but other times they would take this island as their new home until their deaths. This integration was more fully realized than any of the others we have discussed. Here, natives would commonly join the buccaneers in their ships as they left to sea "with the rovers and may spend three or four years away without visiting their homelands."[144]

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[141] Johnson, *A General History of the Pirates*, 130-131.
[142] Alexander O. Exquemelin, *The Buccaneers of America,* Trans. Alexis Brown (Mineola: Dover Publications, 1969), 21.
[143] Exquemelin, *Buccaneers of America*, 219.
[144] Exquemelin, *Buccaneers of America*, 220.

Exquemelin goes on to report that these extended periods of time resulted in a large number of the natives learning French and English, more easily allowing pirate integration.

Furthermore, these natives governed themselves in a republic "having no chief over them whom they acknowledge as lord or king."[145] This style of governance was more than amicable to the pirates whose entire social structure was democratized. The natives also had a tradition of allowing buccaneers to marry native women, with the odd practice of allowing them to leave at any time without consequence and retain the same woman upon their return. In the cases where these marriages lasted, the wife of the pirate would even conduct the same ritual upon their death as they did for native husbands. This ritual involved visiting their grave daily for an entire year, and then the next year they would dig up their bones and carry them with them for another year.[146]

Exquemelin makes no mention of the Buccaneers attempting to stop this ceremony, which is an incredible departure from the religious practices of the time. This may seem unimportant to some, but this was a period of time in which the words "Christian" and "European" were used interchangeably. Religion was inherently intertwined with the lives of Europeans throughout the seventeenth century, and this did not stop once an individual became a pirate, even if pirates were not known for their rigorous adherence to religious practice. Yet, the difficulty of converting American Indians was infamous among priests. The Catholic priest Pére Labat once wrote:

[145] Exquemelin, *The Buccaneers of America*, 220.
[146] Exquemelin, *The Buccaneers of America*, 223-224.

> They remembered their baptism and their Christianity only so long as they remained with [a priest], and returned to their own religion or libertinism the moment they set foot on their own island.[147]

Labat makes clear that there is little arguing that the natives of the Caribbean islands were far from Christian. The pirates who lived here were not totally rejecting their pirate culture in order to join the natives of Cabo Gracias a Dios, only their original society's culture, as they lived in a pirate-like republic outside of imperial reach.

What is found, then, in our search of a pirate kingdom, where sea rovers could rest far from the reach of the law, was not a pirate kingdom. It was an integrated society where pirates and natives lived in a synthesized culture, confederated together against Spanish attack, often in fact, hunting Spanish who dared to come near.[148] Pirates alone would never have the numbers to defend themselves when roots were planted, and they were unable to take to sea when obviously outmatched. In Madagascar, piratical government (or in Baldridge's case, overly liberal government) resulted in a bloody death match for political supremacy. On New Providence island, a lack of cohesion resulted in a mad scramble towards safety, whether in the arms of the government or as far from it as possible. Then on the coast of Brazil, the logwood cutters found themselves in an uneasy and only occasional alliance with the natives resulting in them, more often than not, scrambling into the forest for safety, lest they be subjected to the same treatment they subjected to others. A pirate paradise then, where pirates could be pirates and live lives in peace, required the politics that so often killed them, only not in the place they suspected.

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[147] Pére Labat, *The Memoirs of Pére Labat, 1693-1705*, ed. By John Eaden (London: Frank Cass And Company, 1970), 80.
[148] Exquemelin, *The Buccaneers of America*, 224-225.

The natives of the Caribbean often had aligned interest with the pirates that they did not often see. The key to a piratical society was somewhere pirates so often did not think to look.

Conclusion

The methods through which pirates attempted to retire tell us a great deal. We know that at least some pirates had an endgame, whether it was to wait for an Act of Grace, to hide, to travel to a country that was less aware of their past, or even to establish their own state far away from where they had originated. In all, success in going home was entirely dependent on a pirate's willingness to stop being a pirate, or to give up the advantages they had gained during that time. A lethargic or stubborn approach to adaptation, in the world of piratical retirement, was death.

When pirates first went on the account, they separated themselves from all others. This separation freed pirates from the restrictions they had lived under in their societies of old as they found a new way of life in the piratical culture that (more than likely) had formed before they personally became a pirate. Pirates returned home with the knowledge that at least some, if not many, of the freedoms they had enjoyed as criminals would be revoked. Even when pirates took the Act of Grace to return home they had trouble just getting home without backsliding into piracy.[149] Yet, this was the devil's deal as it were, that in order to return home and live a comfortable life they had to surrender some of what they had gained, even if what they had gained was not money or any other physical object. Attempts, like Blackbeard's, to have it all were akin to suicide.

[149] "A List of the Names of such Pirates as Surrender'd themselves at Providence, 3 June 1718, ADM 1/2282" in Pirates in Their Own Words, ed. By E.T. Fox (Raleigh: Lulu Press, 2014), 366-372.

In the event that pirates chose to settle away from European nations, they faced the challenge of measuring give and take with their new neighbors (or house mates). If pirates retained too much of their piratical culture and customs and chose to attempt self-rule, as was the case in Ranter Bay, the result was a destructive kingdom that existed in perpetual turmoil. Such a chaotic nation did not provide the ideal place for one to live out their days after piracy. Similarly, the logwood cutters often prospered at the expense of the natives they had enslaved and thus lacked the alliances that would have been necessary in order to repel Spanish invasions. The pirates on New Providence did not even have the cohesion, in a population that was almost entirely pirate, to repel such attacks.

One clearly successful method for pirates to create the ideal place of retirement was to surrender part of their own culture and accept that of a larger body of natives or another friendly group, as occurred at Cabo Gracias a Dios. This cooperative community found itself in a strong enough position to repel the Spanish and operate with an egalitarian government that had stability. We see then that one of the most successful solutions to creating a pirate paradise, was to reject the greed that often drove their actions and instead surrender part of what they had gained in order to reach their true goal. Though other strategies proved successful for at least a time, such as the illusive Cracker's remote merchant settlement near the Gambia river in Africa, we do not have the evidence to fully analyze them.[150] Though from the examples available to us, it becomes clear that sea rovers had the potential to secure themselves a "good ending" as

[150] Charles Johnson, *A General History of the Pirates* (Columbia: Gannet Games, 2018), 130-131.

their time as pirates came to an end, in spite of the savagery that drove them earlier in life.

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